When Will We See Huntr/x and Jinu Again?

KPOP Demon Hunters

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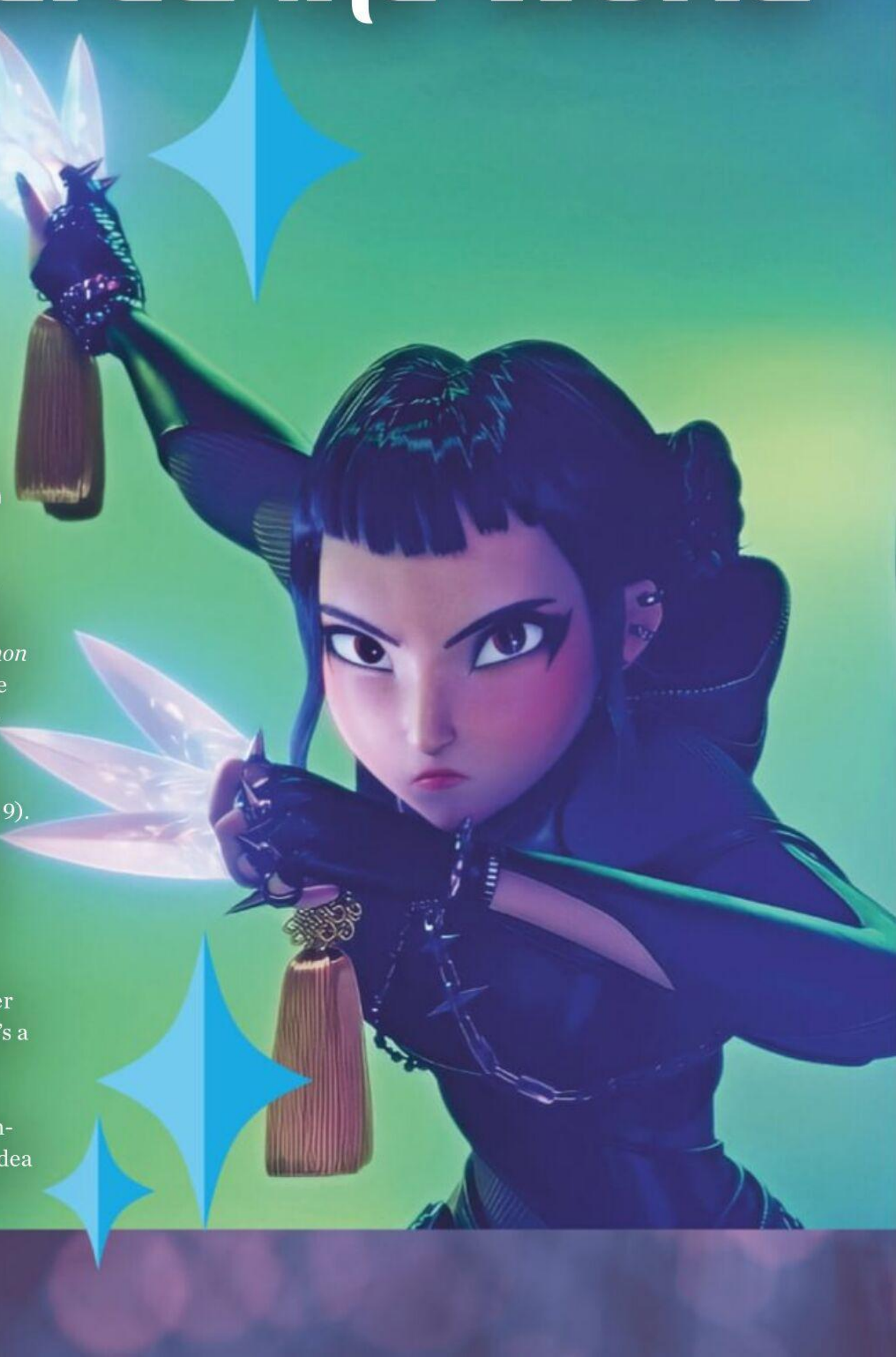
How KPop De Conquered the World

Co-director Maggie Kang dreamed up a supernatural story grounded in Korea-specific details, and viewers around the globe are enjoying the results. By Dan Clarendon



We're all living under a golden Honmoon now that *KPop Demon Hunters* has become a global sensation—it's Netflix's most-watched original film ever, and its soundtrack has topped the charts (see sidebar, page 9).

Across just 96 minutes, the film mixes comedy, action, drama and musical set pieces that blend fight choreography with synchronized dance moves. Viewers see the importance of friendship, girl power and living authentically...and there's a scene-stealing "derpy" tiger with a six-eyed magpie friend, to boot.

What could become a multibillion-dollar franchise all started with an idea to "make an animated movie set in

mon Hunters

KPop Demon Hunters is tipped to win the Oscar for Best Animated Film at the 2026 Academy Awards, while "Golden" will be submitted for Best Original Song.

Korea that really showcased our culture and our mythology," Maggie Kang, the film's co-writer and co-director, said in a behind-the-scenes Netflix featurette.

"I thought demons would be visually spectacular in an animated movie, and that led to demon hunters, and K-pop was the last ingredient in the concept," she explained.

In Kang's story—which she wrote alongside Chris Appelhans, Danya Jimenez and Hannah McMechan—demons working for the evil ruler Gwi-Ma feed on the souls of humans, and they'd take over the world if not for the

magical Honmoon barrier sung into existence by trios of demon hunters across generations.

"We have this amazing tradition, which is the mudang," Kang said at a Netflix Creative Asia conference, per *Variety*. "It's Korean shamanism. So the idea of using music to, you know, and song to ward off demons. This is what the mudang did."

When *KPop Demon Hunters* picks up, the latest trio of demon hunters is Huntr/x, a girl group composed of Rumi, Mira and Zoey (and inspired by real-life K-pop groups like Itzy, Blackpink and Twice). "When it comes to demon-hunting and music-making, they all have their role, and it comes together in a magical way," Kang said in the featurette.

Their rivals in the music biz are the Saja Boys, a boy band whose pop idol exteriors hide their true demon nature. In crafting the Saja Boys, the filmmakers drew upon the real-life (and all human) groups BTS, Stray Kids and Ateez.

"We became students of K-pop—the skill of the music, the performers, the look. It takes incredible talent and expertise to do that," Appelhans added.

Normally, Huntr/x would make short work of the Saja Boys, but Rumi has a secret that nearly spells the girl group's undoing: She's half-demon herself. And worse, she's falling for Jinu, a Saja Boys member with a tortured past. (As in, *centuries* past.)

Once Sony Pictures Animation picked up the project for release on Netflix, Kang found a co-director in *Wish Dragon* director Appelhans, whose wife is Korean.

The duo made sure everything in the film "was seen through this Korean lens," whether it's the placement of napkins under the chopsticks or the no-parking signs Seoul residents ignore, as Kang told *Time*: "The characters are going to eat at a restaurant, it's just a conversation around food at the dinner table, but what is the food that's on the table? What does the background look like? Does it feel like Korea? Everything was designed to honor authenticity of the Korean culture."

Speaking of authenticity, Kang, Appelhans and executive music producer Ian Eisendrath enlisted bona fide K-pop producers to work on the

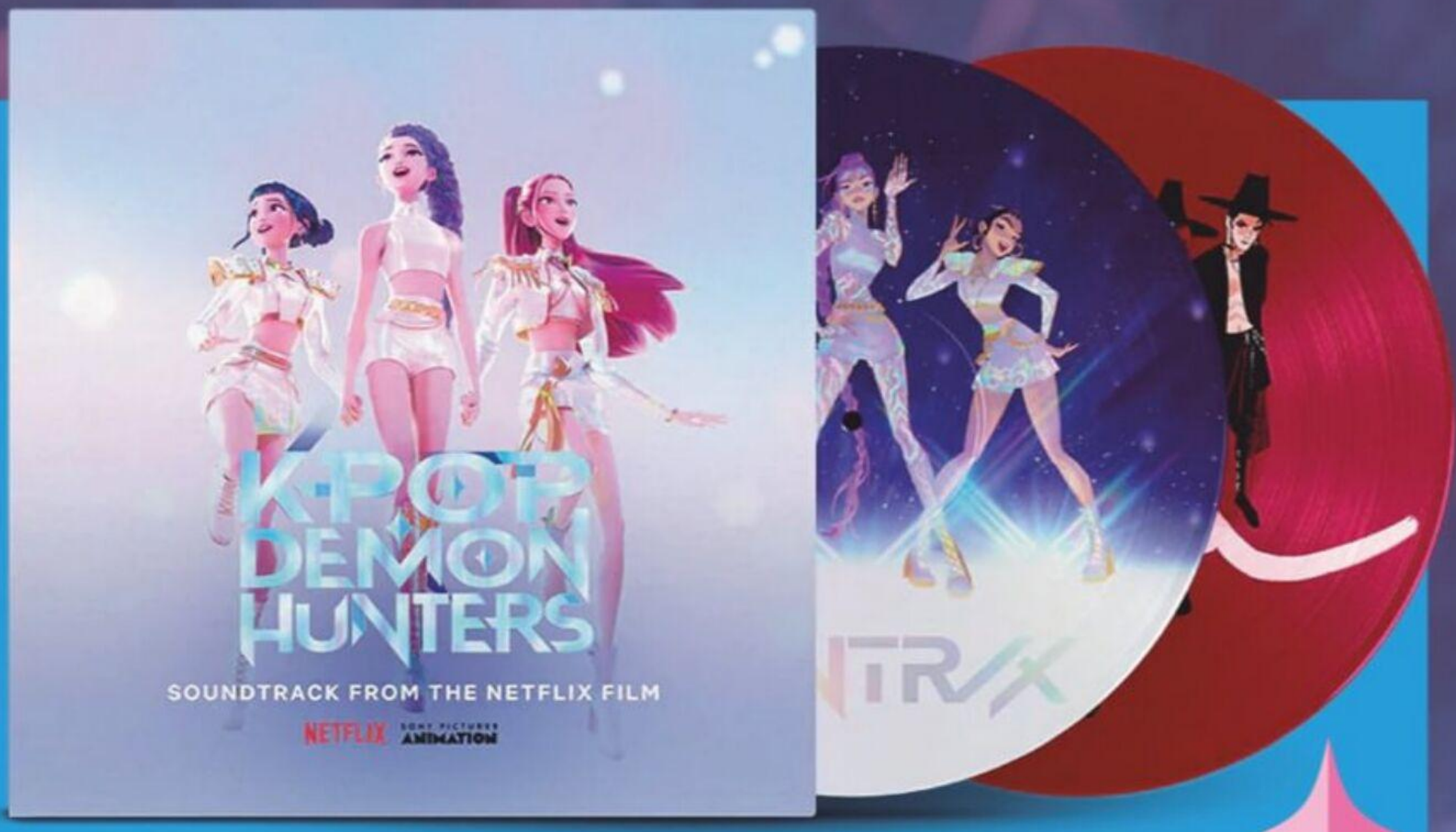
Clockwise from top left: Derpy Tiger toys are regularly selling out, and in October 2025, Netflix inked a deal with Mattel and Hasbro to release more merchandise; Huntr/x was inspired by K-pop stars like Blackpink, while the Saja Boys are modeled on groups like Stray Kids; the movie features plenty of references to Korean culture.

soundtrack, including The Black Label co-founder Teddy Park and BTS collaborators Lindgren, Stephen Kirk and Jenna Andrews.

Eisendrath described the team of songwriters to *Forbes* as "the Avengers of pop," adding that K-pop is "perfect for characters to sing and dance to. There's such variety. These tracks are huge—hundreds and hundreds of vocal tracks on every song. There are so many elements in these tracks."

For as meaningful as the culture-specific details are to viewers of Korean descent, the film, like the genre of K-pop, has universal appeal, as Ejae, the artist behind Rumi's singing voice, told *Time*: "K-pop was simply the vessel to convey a deeper truth: the importance of loving every part of yourself, both the good and the bad, and finding beauty in your flaws and mistakes. It's also about reminding people that they're not alone, and that it's OK to lean on loved ones for support instead of trying to fix everything on your own."

From top: Mira, Rumi and Zoey have their own ramen flavors—Spice Queen, Superstar and Hamburger, respectively; Huntr/x skins are available in Fortnite; Arden Cho (Rumi) and Kevin Woo (Mystery Saja) joined fans at the sing-along experience in NYC in August.



By the Numbers

No. 1

was the ranking "Golden" hit on the *Billboard* Hot 100, while the soundtrack album made the top spot on the *Billboard* 200

4 SIMULTANEOUS TOP 10

tracks on the Hot 100—"Golden," "Your Idol," "Soda Pop" and "How It's Done"—was a first for a soundtrack in *Billboard* history

3+ BILLION

times the soundtrack album has been streamed

1 MILLION

RIAA-certified unit sales of the soundtrack album sold, making it a platinum album

95% TOMATOMETER SCORE

on Rotten Tomatoes, with a 99% Popcornmeter score from viewers

$100 MILLION

was the budget to produce the film

325.1 MILLION

views over the first 91 days streaming, making it Netflix's most popular movie of all time

1,750 MOVIE THEATERS

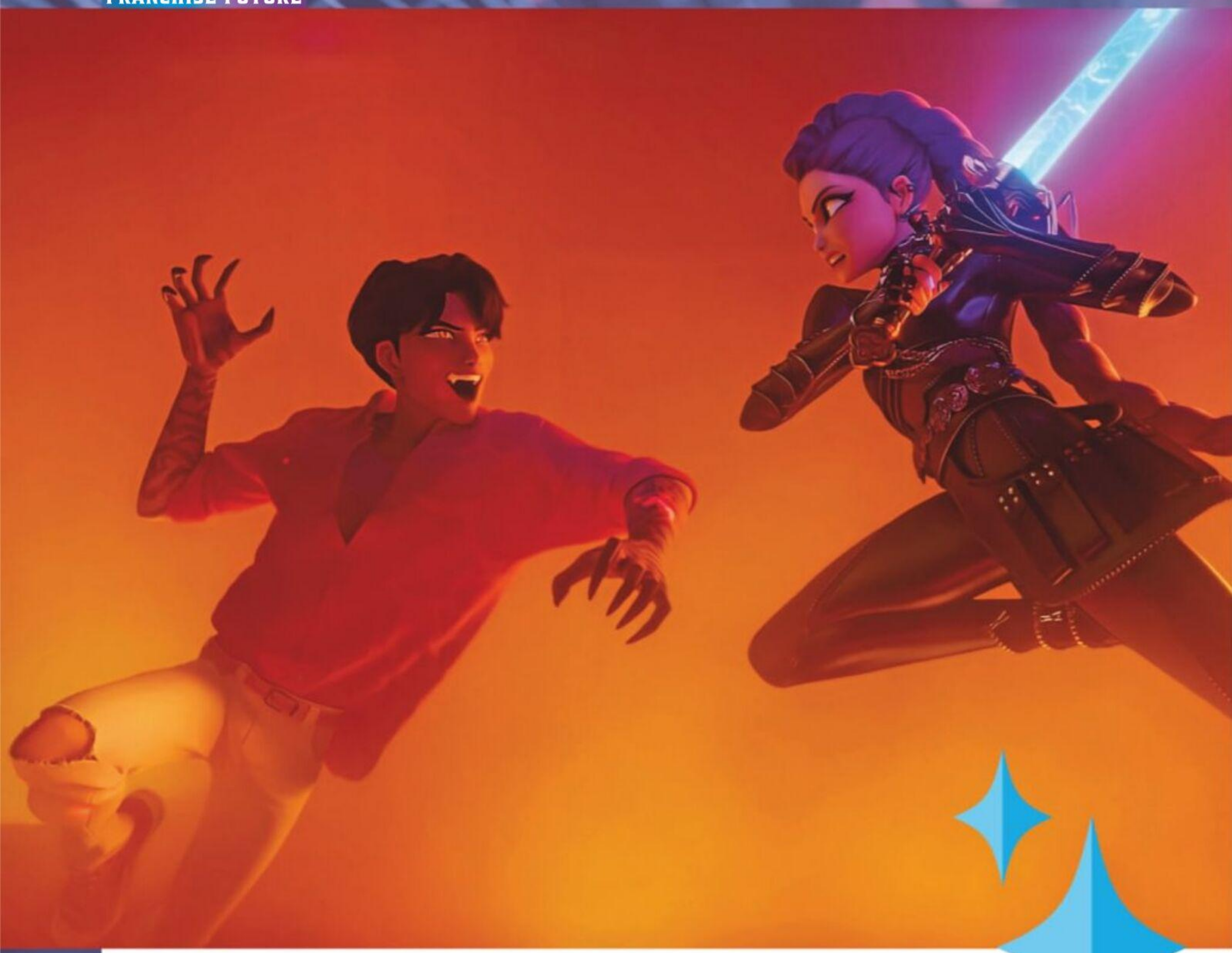
hosted the sing-along version of the film, with more than 1,300 screenings sold out

1st TIME A NETFLIX FILM

topped the domestic box office after the sing-along version of the film reaped an estimated $19.2 million in grosses

7 YEARS

is how long it took to make the film, between development and production, while one of the main characters (Rumi) was created for a different project two years before that



When Will We See HUNTR/X & Jinu Again?

A film trilogy? A TV series? A live-action remake? *KPop Demon Hunters* might be sparking an entire pop culture universe.

By Dan Clarendon

Are you ready for the Hollywood takedown? With the monstrous success of *KPop Demon Hunters* on Netflix and the sing-along version in theaters, the Huntr/x story is bound to continue in a sequel—or sequels, plural—and that might just be the start of the *Demon Hunters* franchise.

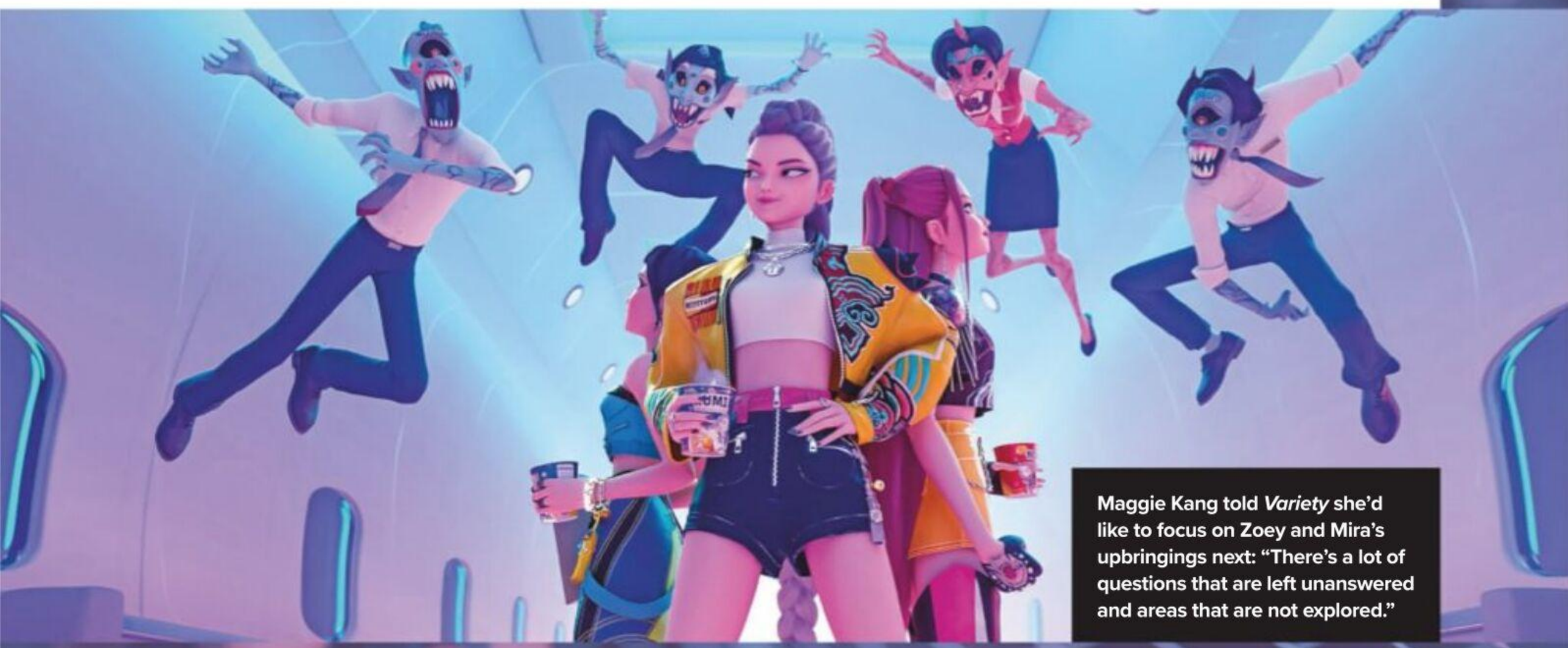
TheWrap reported in July 2025 that Netflix was considering two more *KPop Demon Hunters* films to turn the movie into a trilogy—and also a stage musical, a live-action remake and a television series.

A month later, *The Hollywood Reporter* touted Sony and Netflix were in talks for the second film.

In an October 2025 interview with the BBC, co-director Maggie Kang said she couldn't go into specifics about the *KPop Demon Hunters*' future but noted, "There's definitely more we can do with these characters in this world. And whatever it will be, it will be a story that deserves to be a sequel, and it will be something that we want to see."

She also ruled out a live-action version, telling the outlet, "There's so many elements of the tone and the comedy that are so suited for animation. It's really hard to imagine these characters in a live-action world. It would feel too grounded. So totally it wouldn't work for me."

Meanwhile, an origin story seems to be on the way to our screens: In September, a PG-rated animated short film prequel titled *Debut: A Kpop Demon Hunters Story* was filed with the Motion Picture Association's Classification and Rating Administration. ✦

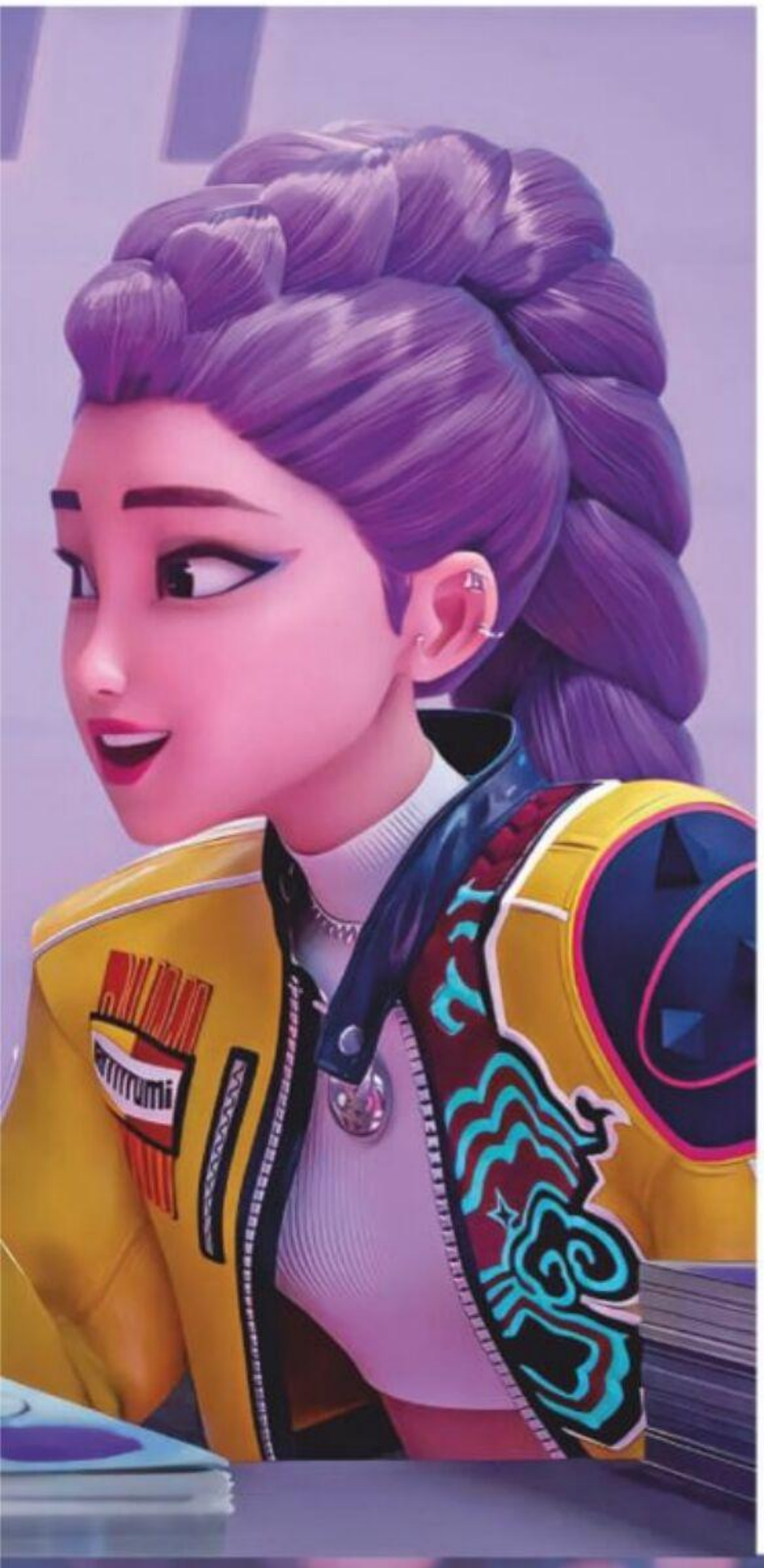


Maggie Kang told *Variety* she'd like to focus on Zoey and Mira's upbringings next: "There's a lot of questions that are left unanswered and areas that are not explored."

6 Biggest Questions We Want Answered

There'd better be a *KPop Demon Hunters* sequel, because the film has some loose threads in need of tying. By Dan Clarendon

Co-directors Maggie Kang and Chris Appelhans said they planned for a sequel and left open plot points like Rumi's demon origin, the fate of Jinu and the mystery of the Honmoon barrier.



1. How did Rumi's parents get together?

Celine, Rumi's mentor and adoptive mother, has a conversation with a young Rumi where she reveals that the little girl's dad was a demon and her mom was a hunter. So how did they fall in love? Were they even in love?

2. How did Rumi's mother die?

By way of exposition, Huntr/x fans tell us Rumi's mother, Mi-yeong Ryu, passed away when Rumi was an infant. But we don't know what exactly happened to her.

3. Is Celine just very protective of Rumi...or is she hiding a secret?

Celine wants Rumi to hide her half-demon status, even when Rumi wants to go public. Is Celine just looking out for the girl she raised, or does she have ulterior motives?

4. Where's the third Sunlight Sister?

Why is Celine the only living member of the Sunlight Sisters we meet? Rumi's mother was part of the demon hunters group that preceded Huntr/x, but where is the third member, and why isn't she mentoring the current hunters?

5. What actually became of Jinu?

Jinu transfers his restored soul to Rumi as he shields her from Gwi-Ma's attack, and he disintegrates after bidding Rumi farewell. But we don't actually get confirmation he's dead. Speaking of which...

6. Where are the other Saja Boys?

After Jinu sacrifices himself, the Huntr/x girls dispatch Abby Saja and Mystery Saja on-screen, but we don't see what happens to Baby Saja and Romance Saja.

MEET HU

This trio of supernatural fighters shows that they can kick demon butt and harmonize at the same time.

NTR/X

"They are fearless, but then they're all so vulnerable. They're funny, they're girls, they're silly, they're cute. They're insecure. They have it all, and I think that's what makes them so relatable to everyone, regardless of gender or age," Arden Cho, who voices Rumi, told the University of Illinois' IPM News.

RUMI

The lead singer with a secret takes center stage in the movie. By Erin Crabtree

Rumi is the heart and soul of Huntr/x in *KPop Demon Hunters*.

As the leader of the K-pop girl group, Rumi appears to have everything under control, persisting with positivity as she, Mira and Zoey attempt to fortify the Honmoon. However, beneath her picture-perfect persona, she's hiding a major secret from her best friends: She has patterns on her skin because her father was a demon. While Rumi hopes her markings will disappear forever when Huntr/x vanquishes demons once and for all, she eventually embraces her uniqueness.

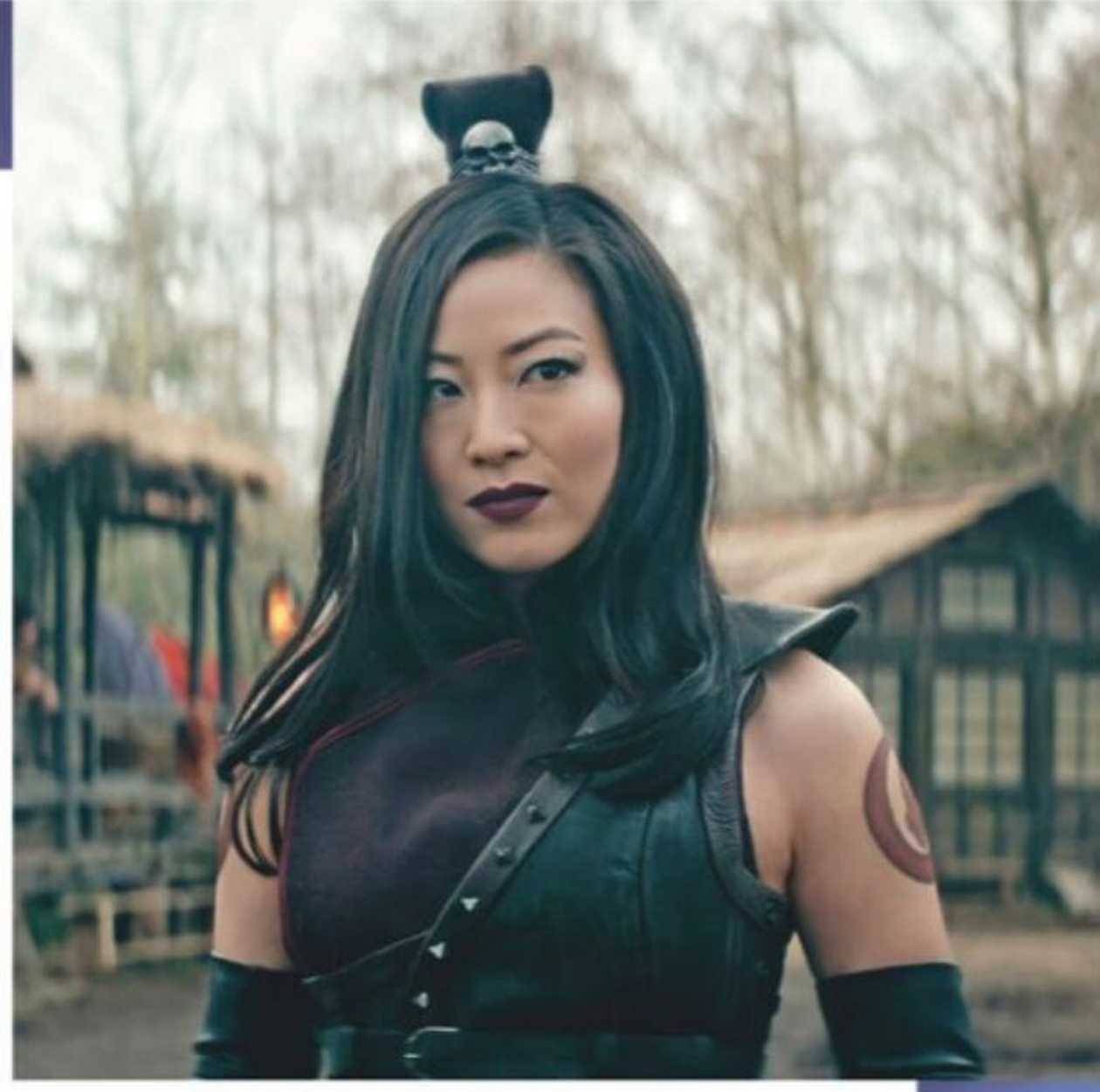
Arden Cho—an actress best known for her roles on *Teen Wolf*, *Chicago Med*, *Partner Track* and *Avatar: The Last Airbender*—provides the voice for Rumi's speaking parts in the film.

"There is so much happening for Rumi," Texas-born Cho told Netflix in August 2025. "One of the things I really loved about the character is that she's so relatable to so many of us. She is a sister to the girls, she's the leader, she has such a big heart, and she wants to do all these amazing things while she's battling identity issues."

Meanwhile, Ejae—a K-pop singer, songwriter and record producer who has worked with Red Velvet, Twice and other South Korean artists—lends her singing voice to Rumi. The South Korean native landed the role after co-writing songs and recording demos for *KPop Demon Hunters*.

When co-director Maggie Kang created the character of Rumi nine years ago for a project called *Plastic Walrus*, she had the same braid but rode a 1980s Tony Hawk skateboard.

Rumi



"She's incredibly hardworking and has that leadership. She puts her best foot forward, but she tries to hide her imperfections and flaws," Ejae told *Variety* of Rumi in a September 2025 interview. "That's something I've always struggled with. I connected with her, wanting to feel loved in every way, not just for her perfect side."

She continued: "Her perseverance, to know how to approach this demon and embrace it, was so beautiful because I feel like that's how I was able to grow as a person: being able to not just deal with your demons but actually cope and embrace your demons."

Cho, for her part, told *Variety* that Rumi's struggles with her identity "are very Korean, in that faults and fears must be hidden.

"I feel with this new generation of Korean Americans, we're owning that and saying, 'Let's break that trauma.'... With this movie, we're breaking generational trauma without telling people we are," she said. "Something that might look so cute and fluffy on the outside, like *KPop Demon Hunters*, is actually so deep and meaningful and so incredibly powerful."

Above: Arden Cho, pictured recording dialogue for *KPop Demon Hunters* (left) and in *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, told *Good Morning America*, "We've got to find Jinu—well, or save him." Below: Ejae, whose full name is Kim Eun-jae, released the single "In Another World" (right) in October. She co-wrote "Golden," "How It's Done" and "Your Idol."

MIRA

Demons know not to mess with the fiercest member of Huntr/x. By Erin Crabtree

K-Pop Demon Hunters' Huntr/x girl group wouldn't be complete without feisty Mira.

The pink-haired singer presents a tough exterior to the world as she fights demons alongside her besties and fellow band members, Rumi and Zoey. While she may seem apathetic at times, Mira carries the weight of being labeled the black sheep and problem child of her family, but with Rumi and Zoey, she finds a place she truly belongs and is completely accepted.

Mira is brought to life with dialogue from actress May Hong—who previously appeared on *Tales of the City* and *Hacks*—and vocal performances by singer and rapper Audrey Nuna, who gained popularity with her singles "Damn Right" and "Comic Sans" featuring Jack Harlow.

"Mira is a skeptic," Hong told Netflix of her character in August 2025. "I think of her as someone who isn't the most trusting at first. [But] once she trusts someone, they're bonded for life."

The model, actress and artist, who was born in Seoul, South Korea, but moved to the U.S. at the age of 6, also described Mira as "a burning fire," noting that "she's really passionate and doesn't let it show sometimes."

For Hong, stepping into the role of Mira was made easier by their similarities. For instance, the two share "a fiercely protective nature over [their] loved ones," she told Deadline in an August 2025 interview.

"I do kind of relate to how tough she is, but I'm not usually that way to people," Hong told PIX11 News in July. "I have it in me—that dog in me—but it's not

Co-director Maggie Kang wanted each member of Huntr/x to have a distinct look, with Mira being the cool and fashion-forward one. She was based on Korean model Ahn So Yeon.

apparent all of the time, and so it's really cathartic to be kind of just like growling and sort of being really aggressive."

She more closely identified with Mira embracing her found family.

"It's hard when you have immigrant parents and you're shifting culturally toward something that they've never seen or known," Hong explained. "I can relate to that part of maybe not feeling fully in your family unit and finding people to really build something with."

As for New Jersey native Nuna, she was drawn not only to the specific character of Mira but also to the central theme of *KPop Demon Hunters*.

"It was really at the core, just the concept and the message," she told TheWrap in October 2025. "I felt like, when I was pitched the plot and meaning of the movie, it just felt like, 'Oh, this is, in some way, shape or form, my life story and something that I've always been really passionate about,' pushing this message of just be your full self."

From top: May Hong is also an artist and has a degree in printmaking from RISD; she appeared in *Hacks* in 2022; Audrey Nuna told website Genius that she "cried so many times" watching the film at its premiere; she released her sophomore album, *Trench*, in 2024.

ZOEY

The peppiest member of the group keeps her bandmates' spirits high. By Erin Crabtree

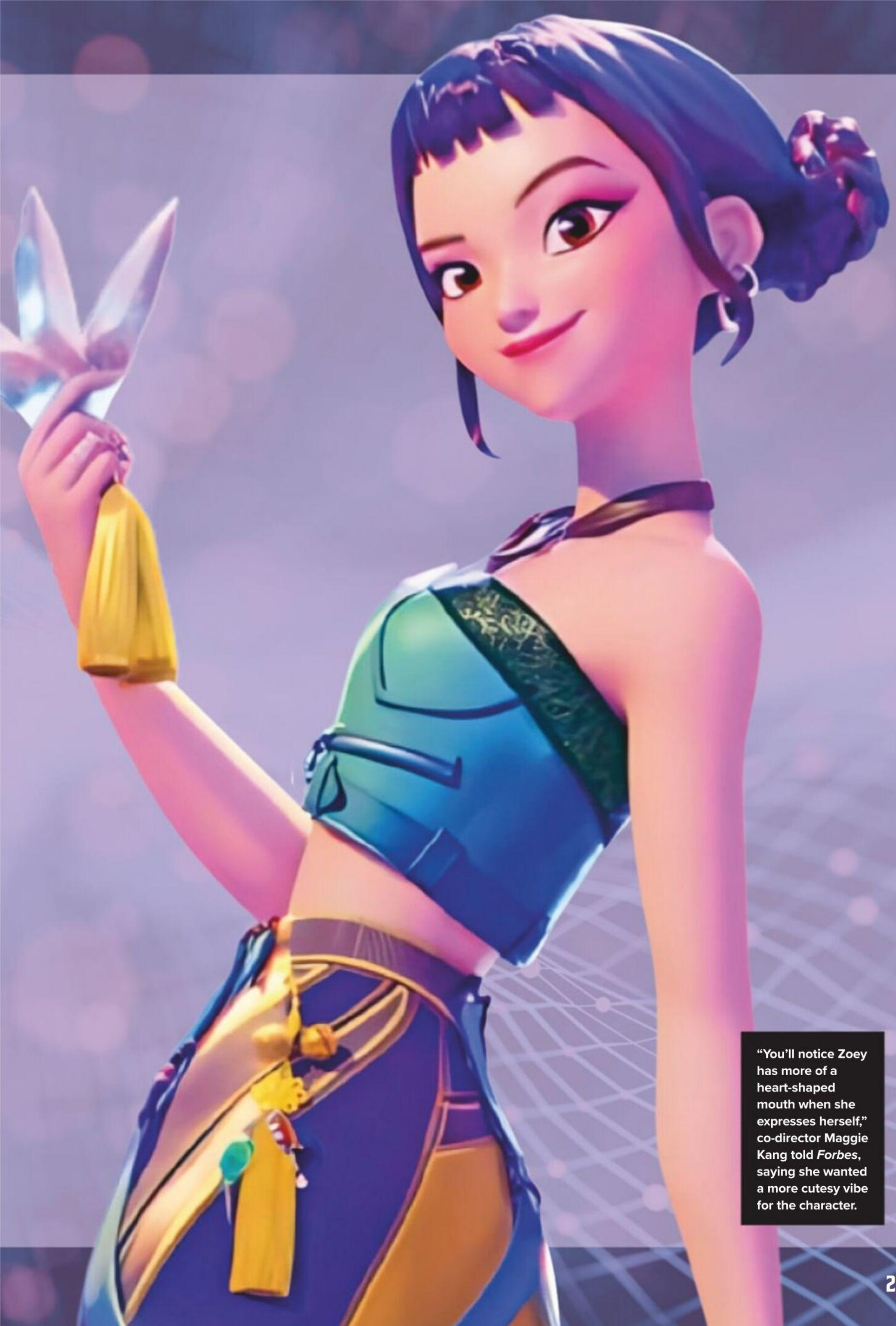
Zoey takes her responsibility as Huntr/x's cheer captain very seriously in *KPop Demon Hunters*, but more than her good attitude sets her apart.

Within the girl group, Zoey is the resident rapper, the youngest member, or maknae, and a California native. Although she's a bit of a people pleaser, Zoey's main priority is protecting her friends, Rumi and Mira.

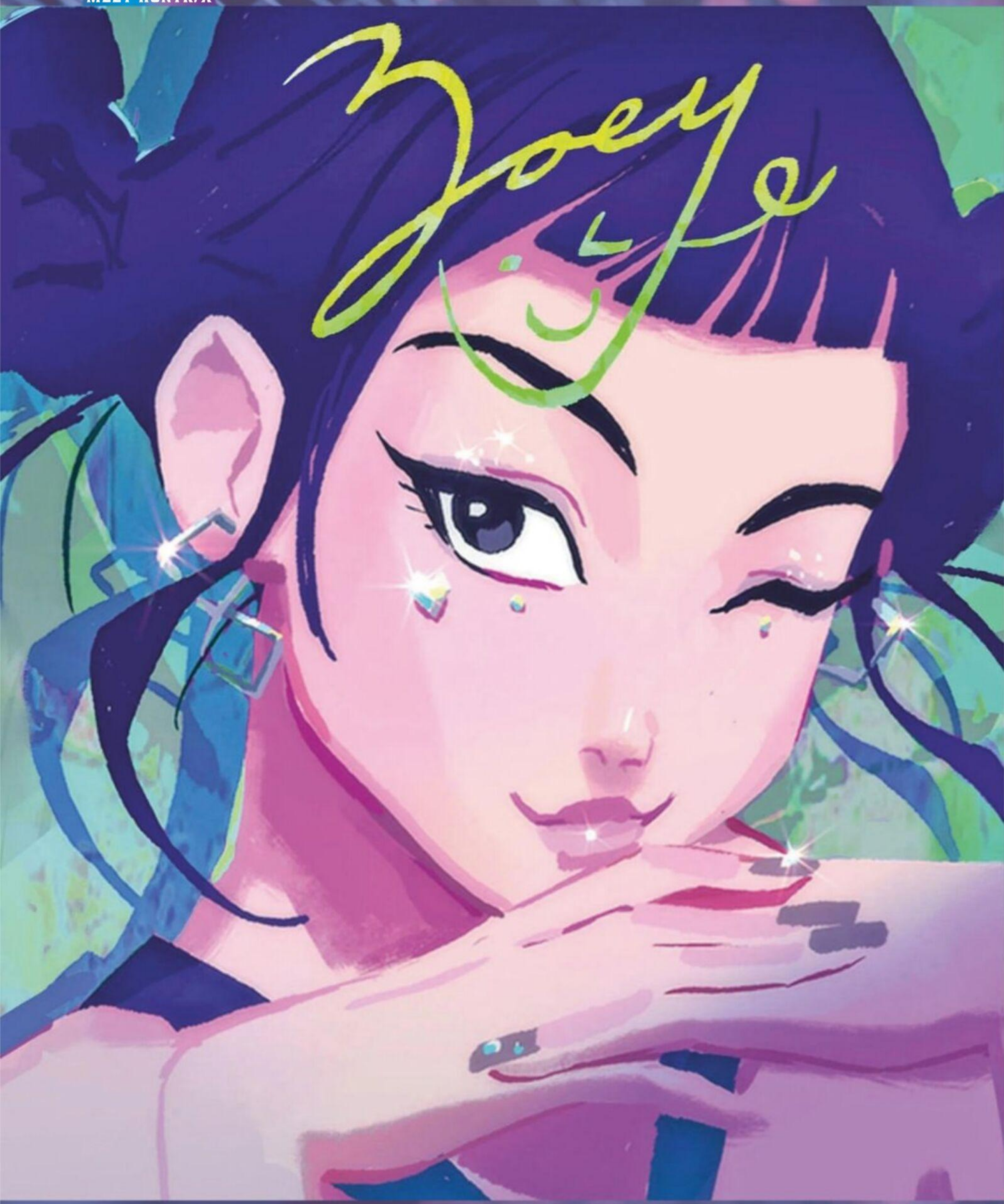
Actress Ji-young Yoo—whose past credits include *Moxie*, *Expats* and *Until Dawn*—perfectly embodies the perky essence of Zoey in her dialogue role, though she recognizes her character's depth.

"She's the only Korean American in the group and is really trying to figure out what that means and where she belongs," the Denver native told Netflix in August 2025. "Feeling a little bit [like an outsider], she's always providing ideas to seem irreplaceable—which she is. She just doesn't necessarily know it herself."

Yoo, whose real name is SunHee Seo, approached her portrayal of Zoey by relating her own experience to her character's. "I think I share a lot in common with Zoey—one of the obvious ones being that we're both Korean American," the actress explained to Deadline in August. "I think Zoey is still in the process of trying to figure out where she fits in the diaspora. She holds both ends of her heritage. I don't know if I share that [feeling] anymore, but it was



"You'll notice Zoey has more of a heart-shaped mouth when she expresses herself," co-director Maggie Kang told *Forbes*, saying she wanted a more cutesy vibe for the character.


Zoey

certainly something I thought about a lot when I was younger."

She also pointed to Zoey's "optimism and her inability to give up" as similarities between herself and her alter ego, noting, "It takes her longer to give in to the demon voices because she's such a deep optimist, and I find that very admirable."

Singer and rapper Rei Ami —who rose to fame with songs like "Snowcone" and "Freak" —provides the vocals for Zoey, with a cheery demeanor that matches the character.

"I feel so seen and heard, truly, if I'm being honest," Ami told ComingSoon in October 2025. "Seeing the comparisons—not that Zoey is entirely me, but there are so many parts of me that I see in her. We're pretty kind of identical."

While her positivity is evident, Ami has tapped into her emotional side since *KPop Demon Hunters* took the world by storm, revealing on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* in October that she got choked up when she overheard a young kid singing the No. 1 hit "Golden" in a local Asian American supermarket.

"I think it's one thing to hear our song on the radio, but to hear it come out of a child, live?" she said. "In H Mart, my favorite place?... I just cried at H Mart."

Above: Ji-young Yoo (pictured right in the 2025 horror flick *Until Dawn*), told Mashable that she's been an ARMY—a fan of BTS—since 2015. "So I'm kind of, like, living out my dreams right now." Below: Rei Ami, whose real name is Sarah Yeeun Lee, said her stage name was inspired by *Sailor Moon* characters; she was thrilled to appear on *SNL*.

I'M YOUR IDOL

The Saja Boys characters were inspired by singers in K-pop boy bands (with fans speculating on who is who), except for Mystery Saja, who was anime-influenced.

WHO ARE THE SAJA

Yes, they're cute, but behind those smiles you'll find a group of cold-blooded killers.

BOYS?!

JINU

The lead singer of the Saja Boys is a bad boy with a good voice. By Dan Clarendon

Across *KPop Demon Hunters*' runtime, Jinu goes from enemy boy-bander to heroic ally. As the lead singer of the Saja Boys, Jinu is initially intent on taking Huntr/x down—on Gwi-Ma's orders—until Rumi inspires him to rebel against his evil overlord.

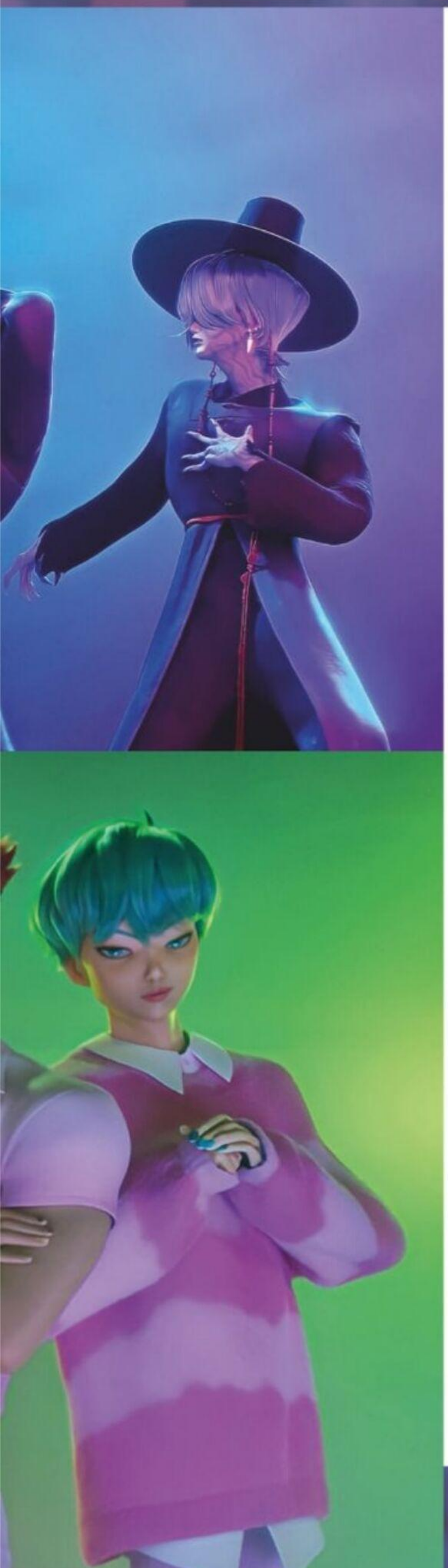
And it's Ahn Hyo-seop, a South Korea-born, Canada-raised actor, who acts out that transformation with his voice role. "A long time ago, Jinu made a very dangerous but life-changing decision in order to protect his family, and that choice led to suffering and being trapped in darkness with his soul under [Gwi-Ma's] control," Ahn explained in a Tudum interview. "Despite all of that, I think Jinu still [holds] onto warmth and has a deep sense of love and curiosity about humanity."

Aside from *KPop Demon Hunters*, Ahn is known for his roles in the South Korean TV series *Dr. Romantic*, *Lovers of the Red Sky*, *Business Proposal* and *A Time Called You*. And the script for *KPop Demon Hunters* "really grabbed" him, he told *USA Today* in August 2025.

"Becoming a demon, it's not something you think of every day, right?" he said with a laugh. "I wasn't sure how to approach it, but as I got deeper into Jinu's backstory—his wounds, his doubts, the emotional weight he carries—I felt naturally connected to him. We all make mistakes in life, and I thought of some of my own, and that really helped me understand Jinu."

Ahn Hyo-seop, who voices Jinu, hopes the demon will be resurrected for the sequel after giving up his soul for Rumi. “As someone who loves Jinu as a fan, too, of course I would love to see him come back,” he told *USA Today*.

WHO ARE THE SAJA BOYS?



Jinu's smooth singing voice, meanwhile, comes via Andrew Choi, a singer and composer who has worked with K-pop acts like NCT 127, Day6 and Shinee. And it was Ejae, the singing voice of Rumi, who got him involved in *KPop Demon Hunters*.

At first, Choi was asked whether he was interested in providing the singing voice for one of the other Saja Boys, Romance or Mystery, so he was surprised when he was offered the part of Jinu, as he revealed to *The Straits Times*.

"I never imagined experiencing something like this, and I'm so honored that I have played a small part," he added. "It's just an incredible blessing."

Oh, and yes, Choi has seen the Instagram video in which Ahn sings "Free"—a rendition of the song that Choi rated 10 out of 10. "It's unfair that Ahn is not only good-looking, but he's also a great actor and such a good singer," he joked. "I was pretty upset."

From top: "Everything happened so quickly and it feels like a blur," Andrew Choi told *The Straits Times* of the film's success; Ahn Hyo-seop; in an Easter egg for K-drama fans, the song "Love, Maybe" by MeloMance, which was featured in Ahn's TV series *Business Proposal*, plays in the scene where Rumi meets Jinu.

Abby SAJA

The eye candy of the group, he's got a soft voice and six-pack abs that he loves to show off. By Dan Clarendon

In *KPop Demon Hunters*, Mira is transfixed by the sight of Abby Saja and his namesake—the washboard abs that have a tendency to peek out from his tight button-downs.

The Saja Boys' main dancer is voiced by SungWon Cho, a voice actor and vlogger who goes by ProZD on YouTube, where he has nearly 4 million subscribers.

Cho told Honorary Reporters that he didn't do anything "too specific" to get into character as Abby. "Obviously, his physicality played a part in it," he said. "He struck me as someone who knew he was hot and loved, so I gave him a voice that had sort of a showoff-y quality to it."

Plus, Cho got to voice the old man in the bathhouse, too. "I did not realize that Arden Cho [who voices Rumi] had been watching me record," he said. "She came into the booth saying, 'How did you do all those voices?!' and was very kind."

Neckwav—a singer based in Seoul, South Korea, whose singles include "Poison" and "All Yours"—is behind Abby's singing voice. On the radio show Cashew Convos, Neckwav said he "laughed so hard" when he saw that Abby was this "masculine-looking dude who's just making everyone fall in love" with him. ("I'm like, I should have sang that better if I were that important of a character!" he added with a laugh.)

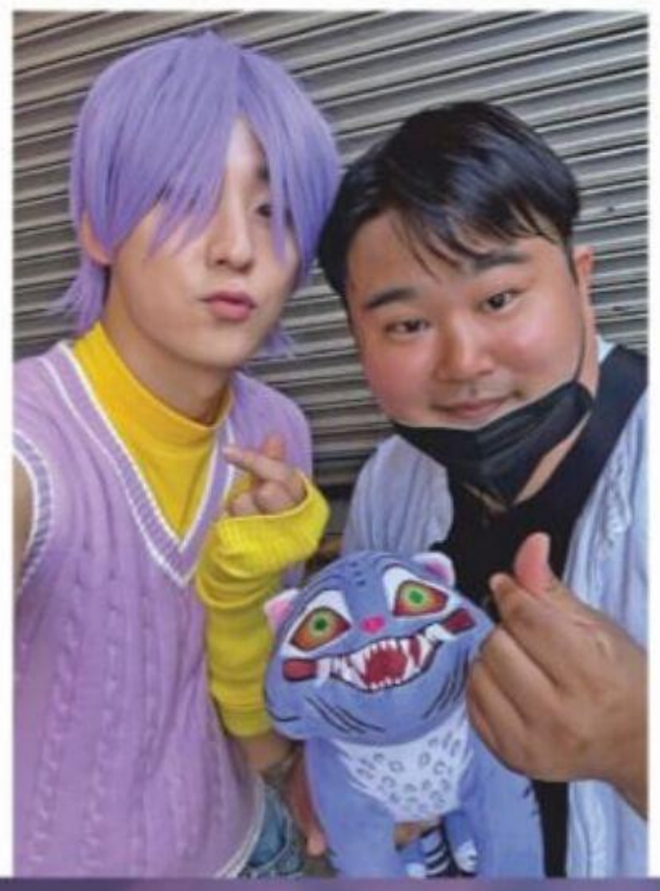
Opposite page, from top: Minnesota native SungWon Cho posts comedy skits, unboxing videos and reviews of games and snack foods on his YouTube channel; Neckwav and the other Saja Boys singers caught up in Seoul in September.

Mystery SAJA

Those sweater vests and that lavender hair—no wonder Zoey fell for him. By Dan Clarendon

His face might be covered by a mop of lilac-colored hair, but there's no hiding the talent behind Mystery Saja.

Voice actor Alan Lee provided Mystery's dialogue—and yes, his barking, too—and also voiced the demon airplane pilot at the start of the film and one of the variety show hosts in *KPop Demon Hunters*. Lee's other voice acting credits include the video games Saints Row, Final Fantasy VII Rebirth and Mortal Kombat 1.



Plus, as Lee revealed on Instagram, he provided the scratch track for Jinu. "For those of you who don't know what scratch tracks are, it means they had me record as the character first and then used it as reference for Ahn Hyo-seop as he recorded for Jinu," Lee explained. "You can hear the essence of my characterization weaved throughout Hyo-seop's performance!"

Kevin Woo, an alum of the K-pop bands XING and U-Kiss, sang Mystery's parts in the Saja Boys' songs "Soda Pop" and "Your Idol" and described the experience as "nostalgic" in a *Forbes* interview. "It brought back a lot of the memories that I had in U-Kiss," he said. "All the little nuances that I have firsthand experience with, it was all incorporated into these two songs."

Mystery's hairstyle helped to streamline the animation process, because he required less facial animation. Zoey's the only one who sees his face. Opposite page, from far left: Kevin Woo; Woo dressed as Mystery with Alan Lee.

Romance SAJA

The most passionate member of the band can't stop flirting with Mira. By Dan Clarendon

A familiar face gives us the speaking voice of Romance Saja, the flirty Saja Boys member with the heart-sharped pink hairstyle.

That voice actor is Joel Kim Booster, a comedian who stars in *Loot* and earned two Emmy nominations for the rom-com film *Fire Island*.

"I have to say I'm so grateful to the fans of that movie, who have made full subreddits and [X] accounts dedicated to my character...who has, I think, roughly four lines in the whole movie, and yet they have just created all these narratives and extrapolated all these ideas about his personality and his life," Booster, who voices other characters in the film including two hosts, said on *eTalk*.

Romance's enchanting singing voice, meanwhile, is provided by singer-songwriter SamUIL Lee, who said in a Morning Wave in Busan interview that it was "pretty surreal" hearing his voice come out of an animated boy-bander. "You don't see anyone lip-syncing to you in the first place, right? But then when you see an animated figure lip-syncing to what you're singing, it's kind of a trip," he said. "It was fun to tell my wife and my brother-in-law, 'Oh yeah, that's me right there.'"

Fans speculated that Romance Saja resembles Stray Kids' Felix. Opposite page, from top: Joel Kim Booster; SamUIL Lee has worked with K-pop artists including Seventeen, RIIZE, Peniel of BTOB and NCT Dream.

Baby SAJA

The maknae, or youngest member, is also the group's main rapper. By Dan Clarendon

Aside from one "goo goo ga ga," Baby Saja doesn't have any other lines in *KPop Demon Hunters*, but when he's not sucking on a hot sauce bottle like a pacifier, the blue-haired dude is spitting rap verses in the Saja Boys' songs.

But you're actually hearing the talented Danny Chung, who not only voices Baby but also co-wrote the Saja Boys song "Soda Pop" and the Huntr/x anthem "How It's Done."

"At first, we were just throwing ideas at the wall," Chung told Genius of writing "How It's Done." "But [executive music producer] Ian Eisendrath really pushed us to think cinematically. 'How It's Done' had to feel like a debut, but it also had to introduce Rumi, her mindset, her backstory, all within a few minutes. That took a few tries to get right."

Luckily for the team, Chung is a lyricist with girl group expertise, as a co-writer of the Blackpink songs "Lovesick Girls," "How You Like That" and "Shut Down."

Meanwhile, "Soda Pop" presented a different challenge. "It was meant to lure you in," the Philadelphia native said. "Cute, bubbly, intentionally annoyingly infectious. It's absolutely an earworm, and that was the point.... 'Soda Pop' is foreshadowing. The whole thing is about a group that wants to consume your soul, but in the brightest way possible." (Consider us consumed!)

"Numerous friends of mine have sent me videos of their kids watching the film and now I can be confident that they will never have to hunt down their identity as I once did," Danny Chung (far left) wrote on Instagram.

Familiar

BOBBY

Ken Jeong

Huntr/x's anxiety-prone manager is voiced by Ken Jeong, known for his scene-stealing roles on *Community* and in the *Hangover* movies, and his job as a panelist on *The Masked Singer*. "I was there [recording dialogue] for two days, and I am getting so much fan mail, and... [people] dress up as Bobby," he said on *Today With Jenna & Friends*, noting that his career has "come full circle from edgy to family-friendly."

The moment when Huntr/x say, "Hi Bobby!" to Ken Jeong's character became a meme. To quote Bobby himself, "The internet loves this and the internet is never wrong."

FACES

Big-name TV stars leaped at the chance to play minor roles in *KPop Demon Hunters*.

By Dan Clarendon

CELINE

Yunjin Kim

Yunjin Kim, best known for starring as Sun on the hit TV show *Lost*, voiced Celine, a former Sunlight Sisters singer who was a demon hunter herself before the girl group passed the mantle to Huntr/x. "She's so good," co-director Chris Appelhans told Collider. "To make that character believable and sympathetic as much as she's flawed...[she] nailed it." (Turn to page 56 to find out which star sang Celine's vocals.)

Some fans have slammed Celine, played by Yunjin Kim (left), as the villain of the film for telling Rumi to hide her true self. "We all carry insecurities and fears that can hinder connections with others," co-director Maggie Kang told website Kbizoom.

HEALER HAN

Daniel Dae Kim

Daniel Dae Kim—who played Yunjin Kim's on-screen husband, Jin, on *Lost*—voiced Healer Han, the sketchy doctor the Huntr/x girls hope can fix Rumi's voice. "[*KPop Demon Hunters* is] all over my social media feeds," he told *Variety*. "I'm honestly tickled every time I see it. I never would have thought that a show about Korean K-pop singers would hit the consciousness of our country as widely as it did, as deeply as it did."

Daniel Dae Kim (below, with Yunjin Kim on *Lost*) told *Variety* that the film's success shows "how far we have progressed as a culture in America that we're accepting now of Asian cinema, Asian content, Asian music, Asian skin care."

Lee Byung-hun told Dispatch that the most memorable scene in the film for him was when "Gwi-Ma clumsily tries to sing along with Jinu's song.... I thought a lot about how to find the right tone. Gwi-Ma is terrifying yet has a clumsy, almost endearing side."

GWI-MA Lee Byung-hun

Lee Byung-hun, an actor known for playing Hwang In-ho in *Squid Game* and Storm Shadow in the *G.I. Joe* movies (far right), voiced the evil Gwi-Ma, overlord of the demon world. Lee told reporters, per SBS Star, that he watched *KPop Demon Hunters* with his son. "He asked, 'Dad, which one are you?' I said, 'I'm the fire.' He looked a bit disappointed," he recalled, laughing. "But he tried to back me up, saying he wasn't really into Huntr/x or Saja Boys and was on Team Gwi-Ma."

The Making of a HitSound

track

Huntr/x singers (from left) Rei Ami, Ejae and Audrey Nuna performed "Golden" on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* in October 2025. Ejae, who co-wrote the song, explained that it came to her while she was driving to the dentist, where she ended up getting a gold filling.

The film's creators found the perfect songwriters and producers to craft K-pop chart-toppers. By Erin Crabtree

Sure, the characters and storyline are engaging, but *KPop Demon Hunters'* music has played a massive role in the movie's success.

Directors Maggie Kang and Chris Appelhans took the first step in the hit-making journey when they approached South Korean record company The Black Label, known for producing hits for artists like Blackpink and 2NE1.

"We knew that, first and foremost, the songs had to be legitimately accepted into the K-pop space and the audience. So we felt that it was important to partner with a label because that was the only way we could get that right sound," Kang told *Forbes*. "There's a way that K-pop music is produced, so it was really to legitimize this album and this group right off the bat."

With The Black Label's clout behind the film, Kang and Appelhans hired Ian Eisendrath as executive music producer. For Eisendrath, whose credits include major TV and film projects like *Only Murders in the Building*, *KPop Demon Hunters* presented a new challenge.

"I've always thought of K-pop as the most theatrical genre of pop, and so I was just instantly excited by the possibilities of what could happen in a narrative context with the K-pop songs [and] incorporating actual, hit-making K-pop artists," Eisendrath told Netflix's Tudum in September 2025. "I just felt like everything was really set up to be a special musical and narrative experience."

A handful of K-pop heavy hitters were selected as producers and songwriters for the soundtrack, including The Black Label co-founder Teddy Park, Grammy winner Lindgren, Grammy nominee Stephen Kirk,

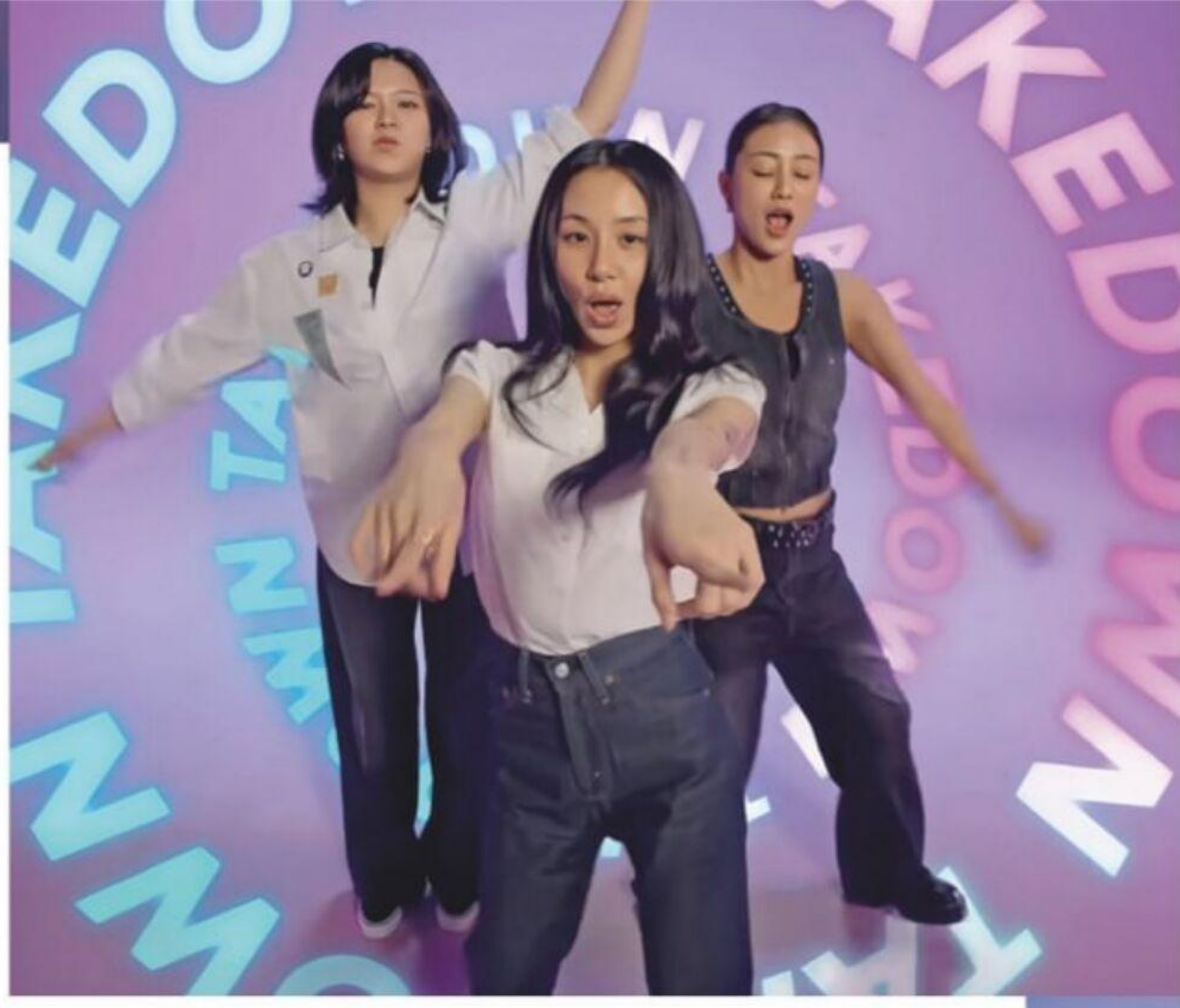
Jenna Andrews, Mark Sonnenblick and Ejae, who would go on to provide Rumi's vocals in the film.

The music pros—who've collaborated with Blackpink, BTS, Twice and Tomorrow X Together—split up into teams to ensure the soundtrack was filled with songs that could easily top the charts.

"We would give those teams different songs, and they would take cracks at it, sometimes many cracks before we landed on the right solution," Appelhans told *Forbes*. "You know when you listen to a great song, and it gives you butterflies in your stomach? By the time a song makes it into the movie, it's giving us butterflies."

That feeling extended beyond the film's crew as the *KPop Demon Hunters* soundtrack topped the *Billboard* 200 albums chart and was certified platinum. "Golden," "Soda Pop," "Your Idol" and "How It's Done" also became Top 10 hits on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart, with "Golden" making history by reaching No. 1.

Meanwhile, Huntr/x vocalists Ejae, Audrey Nuna and Rei Ami were thrust into the spotlight, appearing in a sketch with Bad Bunny on *Saturday Night Live* and performing "Golden" on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* in October 2025.

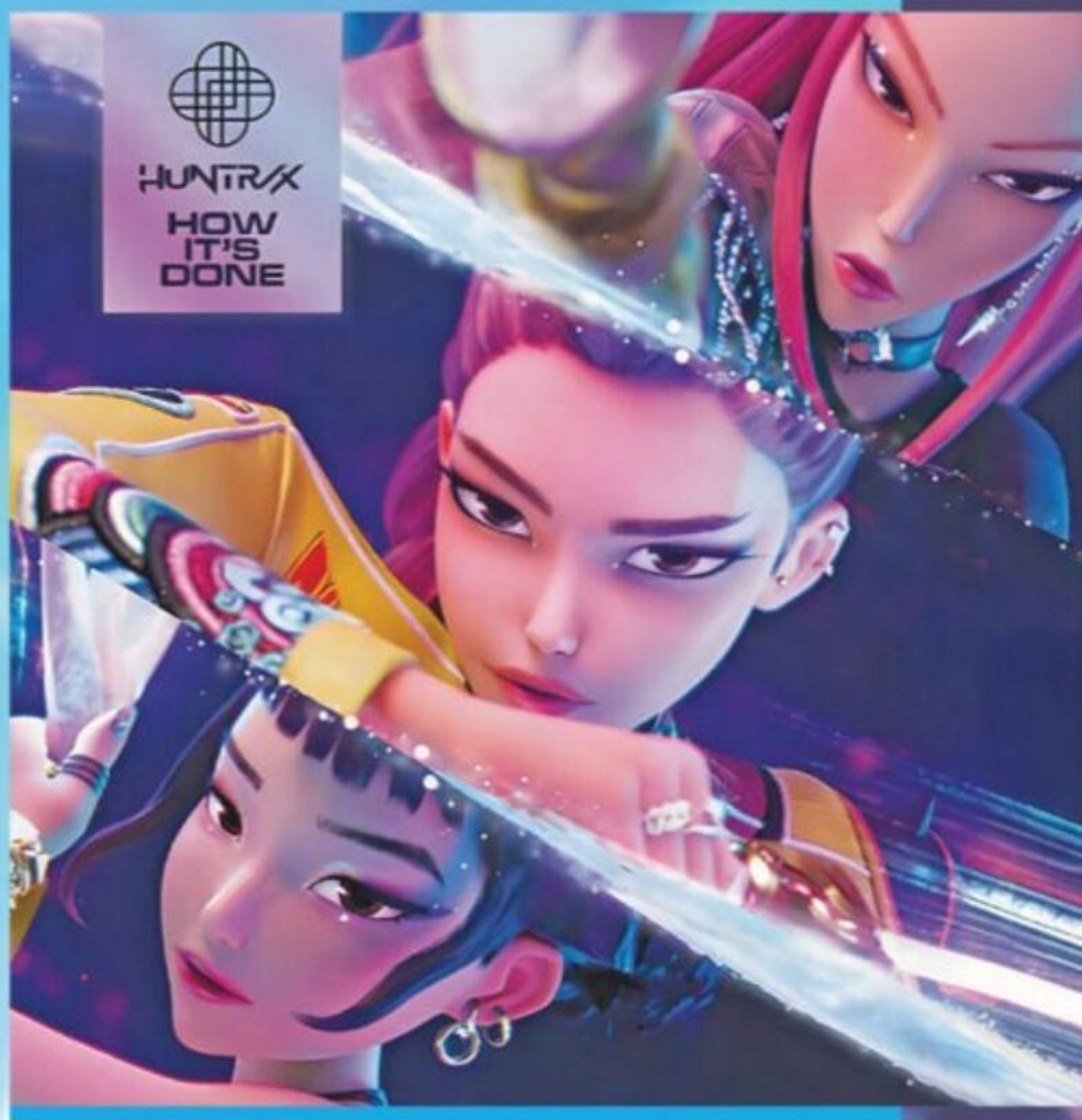


Clockwise from top left: Fallon surprised the singers with a platinum record; Twice's cover of "Takedown" was also released on the deluxe version of their album *This Is For*; Teddy Park has worked with Blackpink since 2016; Ejae sang all the demos for the soundtrack; Huntr/x made their live debut on *Saturday Night Live* with Bowen Yang playing Jinu.

Breaking Down THE

Huntr/x and the Saja Boys became overnight sensations outside of their animated universe. By Erin Crabtree

SONGS



How It's Done

Viewers are introduced to Huntr/x in the film's opening song, written by Ejae, Mark Sonnenblick, Danny Chung, 24, Ido and Teddy Park. The trio immediately prove themselves as fierce warriors, vanquishing demons on their private jet while simultaneously dropping viral lyrics like "fit check for my napalm era." The upbeat track, which was inspired by "Jet Song" from the 1950s musical *West Side Story*, ultimately peaked at No. 8 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart.

Golden

The *Billboard* Hot 100 No. 1 became an unexpected hit after the movie's release in June 2025. Songwriters Ejae, Sonnenblick, Idoˌ 24 and Teddy crafted an empowering anthem for Huntr/x to fortify the Honmoon. Not only is "Golden" perfect for a sing-along, but the emotional depth of lyrics such as "I'm done hiding, now I'm shining like I'm born to be" resonates with fans. The song features a three-octave vocal range, and when the film's creator and co-director Maggie Kang heard the demo for the first time, she cried. "I was like, 'This is it," she told Ejae in an interview with website The Music.

Free

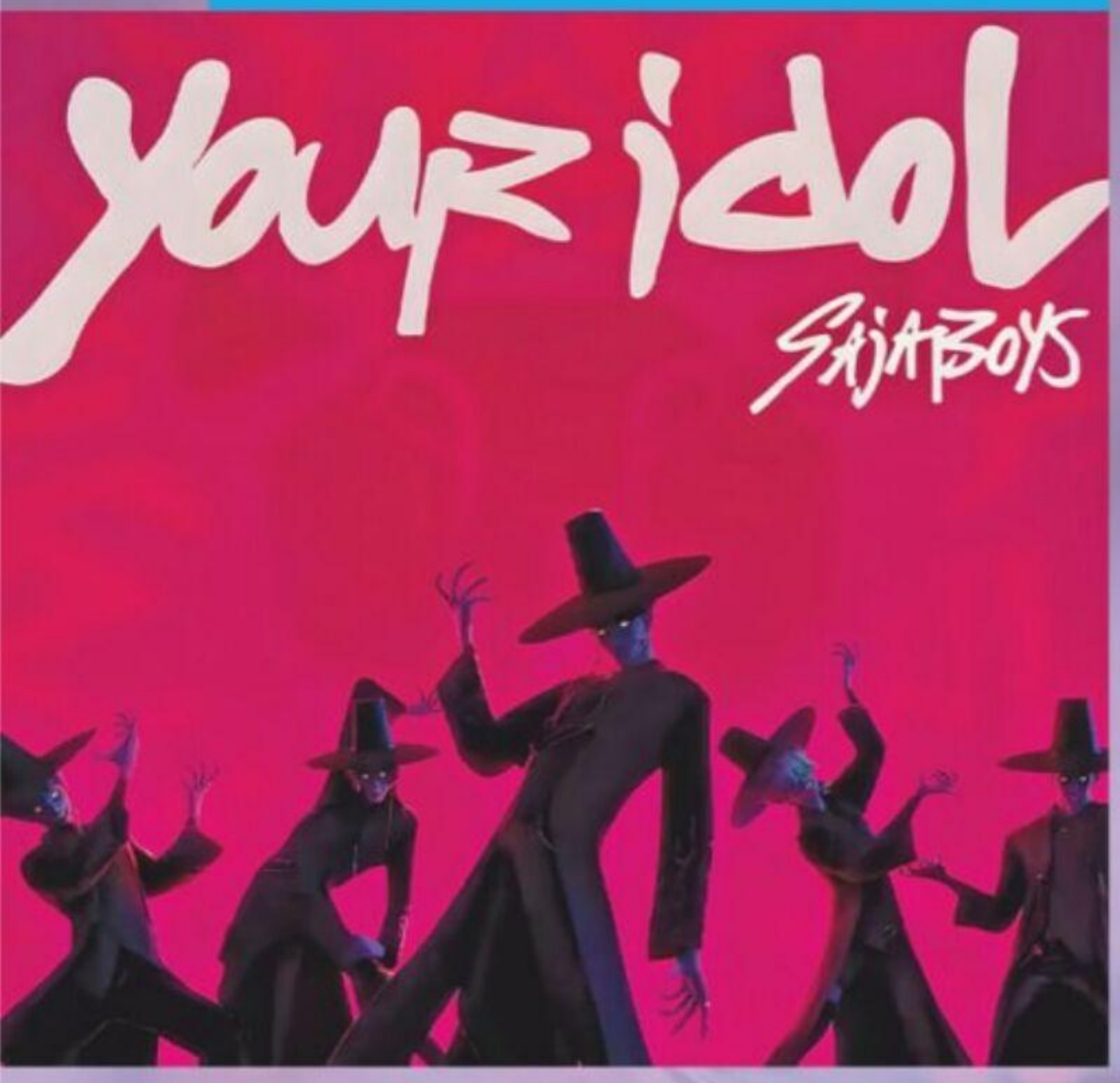
Rumi and Jinu bare their souls in a vulnerable ballad written by Jenna Andrews, Stephen Kirk and Sonnenblick. The characters' desire to rid themselves of their demons and pursue their romantic connection comes through in lyrics such as "We can't fix it if we never face it / Let the past be the past till it's weightless." The duet peaked at No. 23 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. The song is "two people singing to each other, and sharing things they've probably never shared with another human in the world," executive music producer Ian Eisendrath told Netflix's Tudum.

Takedown

Huntr/x initially hopes to destroy the Saja Boys with an animosity-filled diss track, for which Lindgren was the sole songwriter. "When your patterns start to show / It makes the hatred wanna grow outta my veins," read the lyrics of the song that rose to No. 21 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. A version of "Takedown" by Jeongyeon, Jihyo and Chaeyoung from K-pop girl group Twice plays during the film's end credits. Twice debuted the song live during their headlining set at Lollapalooza in August, with a drone show that displayed the message "The Honmoon is sealed."

Your Idol

The Saja Boys fully embrace their villainous side on their final track, penned by Ejae, Sonnenblick, Vince, Kush, 24 and Ido. "I'm the only one who'll love your sins / Feel the way my voice gets underneath your skin," the boy band sings to the enraptured crowd. The real world was just as obsessed, taking the song to No. 4 on the *Billboard* Hot 100.



Soda Pop

Written by Vince, Kush, Chung, 24 and Dominsuk, the Saja Boys' introductory song establishes the boy band as a worthy opponent for Huntr/x. While "Soda Pop" is an undeniable bop, reaching No. 3 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, the demons hint at their sinister intentions to steal fans' souls with lines like "every drop I drink up." Kang told Canada's *eTalk* that she freaked out when BTS' Jungkook covered "Soda Pop" in an Instagram video. "It's amazing," she said. "It's so cool.... Recognition from the idols, from the industry, is everything to us."

What It Sounds Like

In Huntr/x's closing anthem by songwriters Andrews, Kirk and Sonnenblick, the girl group expose their raw, unfiltered voices "without the lies," according to Eisendrath, which allows them to finally overcome the demons and power the Honmoon. While not quite as popular as "Golden," "What It Sounds Like" reached No. 15 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. "It really cements that idea of the film that music brings us together; connection is what we all need to survive, and connection can only be as real and authentic as people are," Eisendrath said.

Stuffy Friend

Every demon hunter needs a supernatural sidekick. That's where Derpy Tiger comes in—or, in this case, a plush stuffed version of the lovable character. netflix.shop, $47.95

Tee-rific

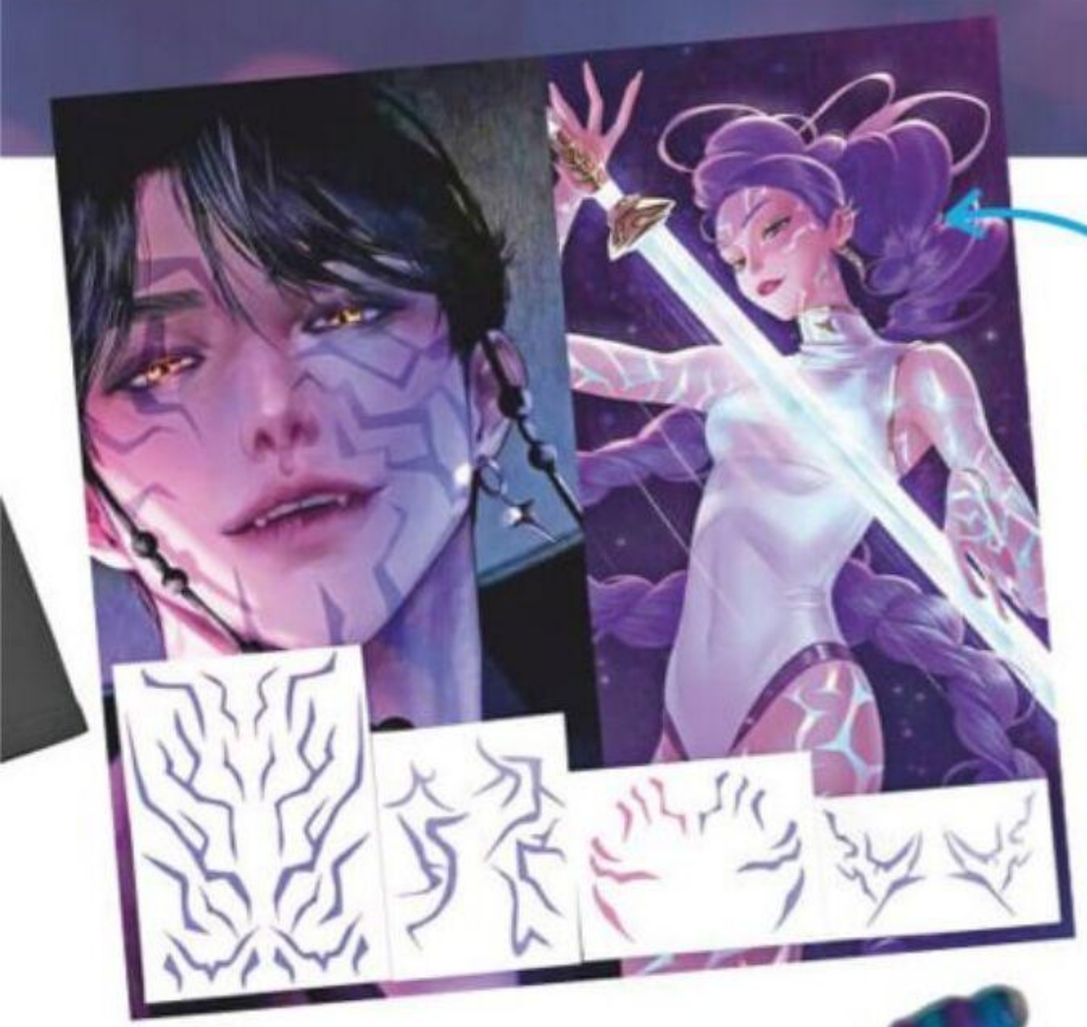
Whether kids or adults, die-hard fans can get the same Huntr/x T-shirt worn by concertgoers and the group's manager, Bobby, in the film. netflix.shop, $24.95-$36.95

Must-Have MERCH

There's something for every *KPop Demon Hunters* fan, regardless of age. By Erin Crabtree

Mini Pop Stars

Collectors will want to get their hands on the Funko Pop! vinyl figures for Rumi, Mira, Zoey, Jinu and a glow-in-the-dark Derpy Tiger with Sussie Bird. funko.com, $14.99



Personal Patterns

Demons never look more stylish than when they're proudly letting their patterns show. Now, fans can emulate their look with a full set of temporary tattoos. etsy.com, $5.19

Bound Together

The bracelet Rumi gave Jinu is recreated with a Korean knot technique and symbolizes good luck and protection for its wearer. etsy.com, $21.99

Dressed to Kill

In addition to colorful wigs and demon-slaying swords, you can find a whole slew of accessories online that go with the perfect Huntr/x costume. amazon.com

Your Idols

The Saja Boys might be more irresistible than ever in the cute chibi illustration featured on a sweatshirt that makes them seem completely harmless. hottopic.com, $36.90

Light It Up

For those who find it impossible to choose between Huntr/x and the Saja Boys, replicas of both fandoms' light stick toys exist. netflix.shop, $49.99

Did You KNOW?

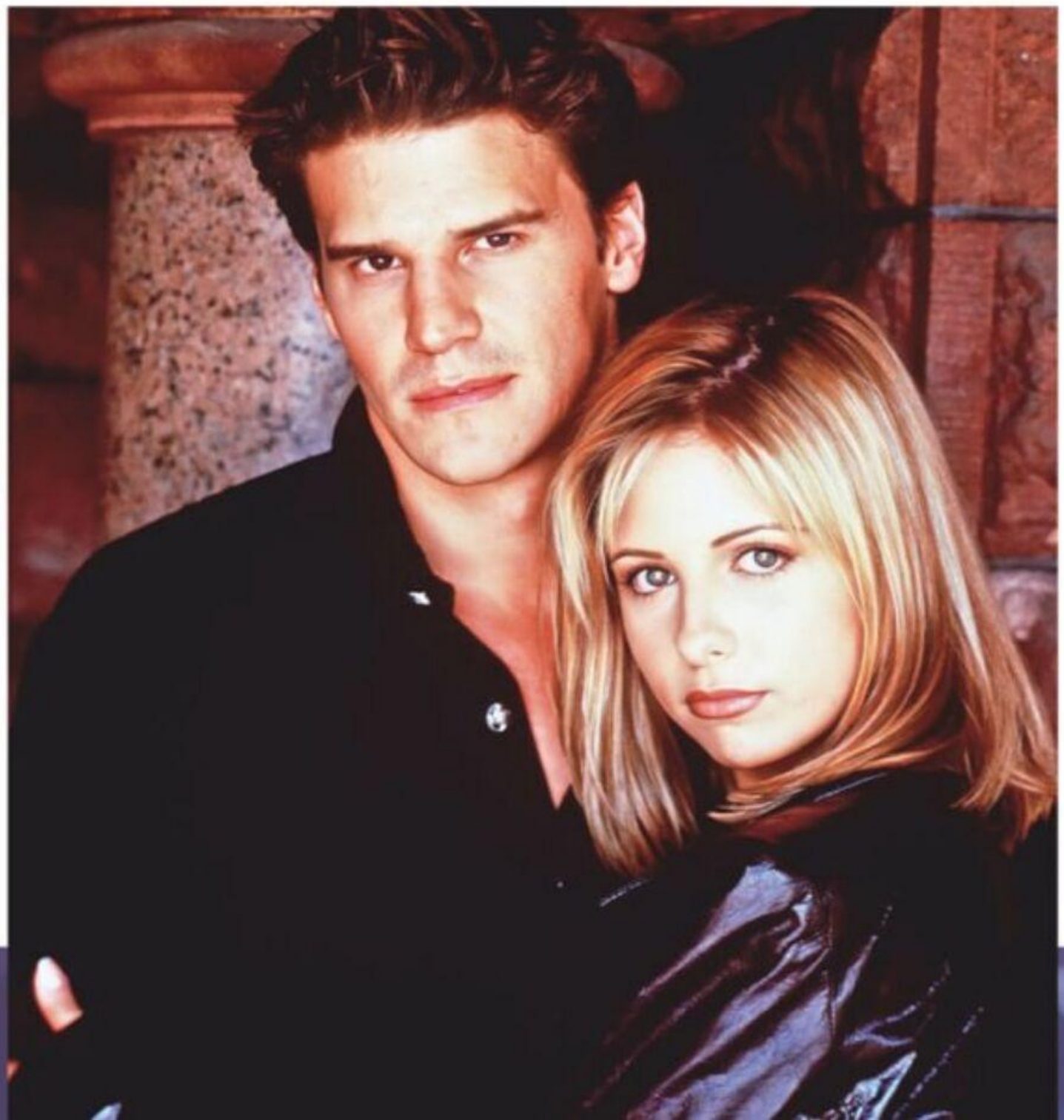
Here are 20 fun, behind-the-scenes facts to learn about *KPop Demon Hunters*. By Erin Crabtree

Cha Eun-woo

Nam Joo-hyuk

▲ 1. The character design for Jinu was inspired by Korean heartthrobs Cha Eun-woo, an actor and singer from the band Astro, and model and actor Nam Joo-hyuk.

▼ 2. Co-director and writer Maggie Kang didn't incorporate K-pop into the film's premise until later. She originally wanted to make an animated movie about demonology, with demon hunters more like Buffy the Vampire Slayer, but transforming Rumi, Mira and Zoey into famous K-pop singers allowed Kang to add another element of Korean culture to the script.



▼ 3. Kang made her directorial debut with *KPop Demon Hunters* after previously working as a storyboard artist on popular animated film franchises such as *Shrek*, *Minions*, *Madagascar*, *Trolls*, *Kung Fu Panda* and more.

4. Kang made several cameos in *KPop Demon Hunters* as a flight attendant demon, a crying demon and a newscaster.

5. Several extra stories were cut from the movie for time, including Huntr/x and the Saja Boys competing in a physical sports arena and Jinu's sister (who's seen in flashbacks) growing up to be the first demon hunter.

6. The Saja Boys share intentional similarities with Korean folklore's jeoseung saja, grim reapers who wear black hanbok (traditional costumes) and wide-brimmed hats and escort the souls of the dead to the afterlife.

7. Arden Cho initially auditioned to voice Celine, but the team behind the film felt she was a better fit for Rumi.

8. The term "Honmoon" was created for *KPop Demon Hunters* and literally means "soul door."

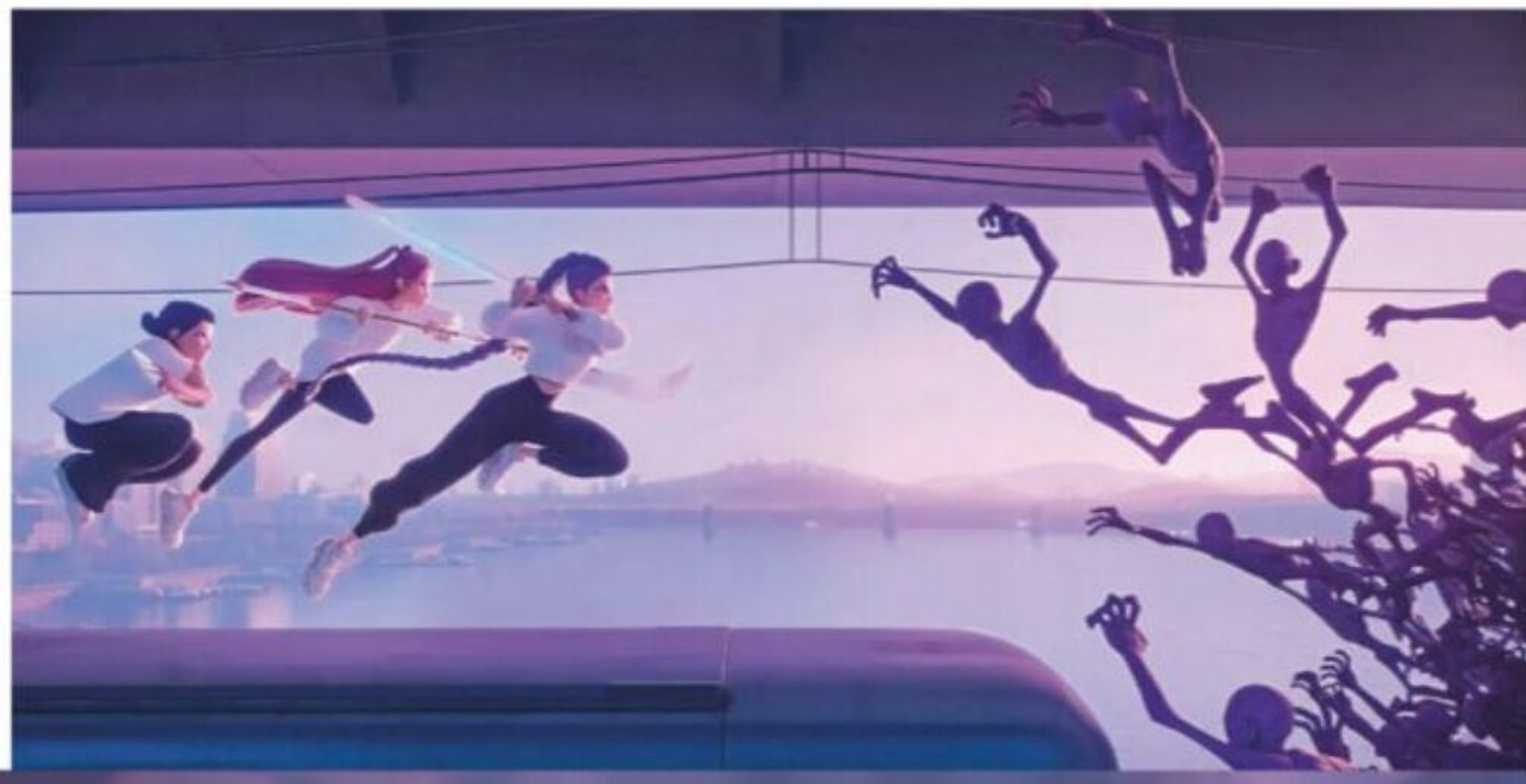
9. Ejae recommended Audrey Nuna and Rei Ami to provide the vocals for Mira and Zoey, respectively.

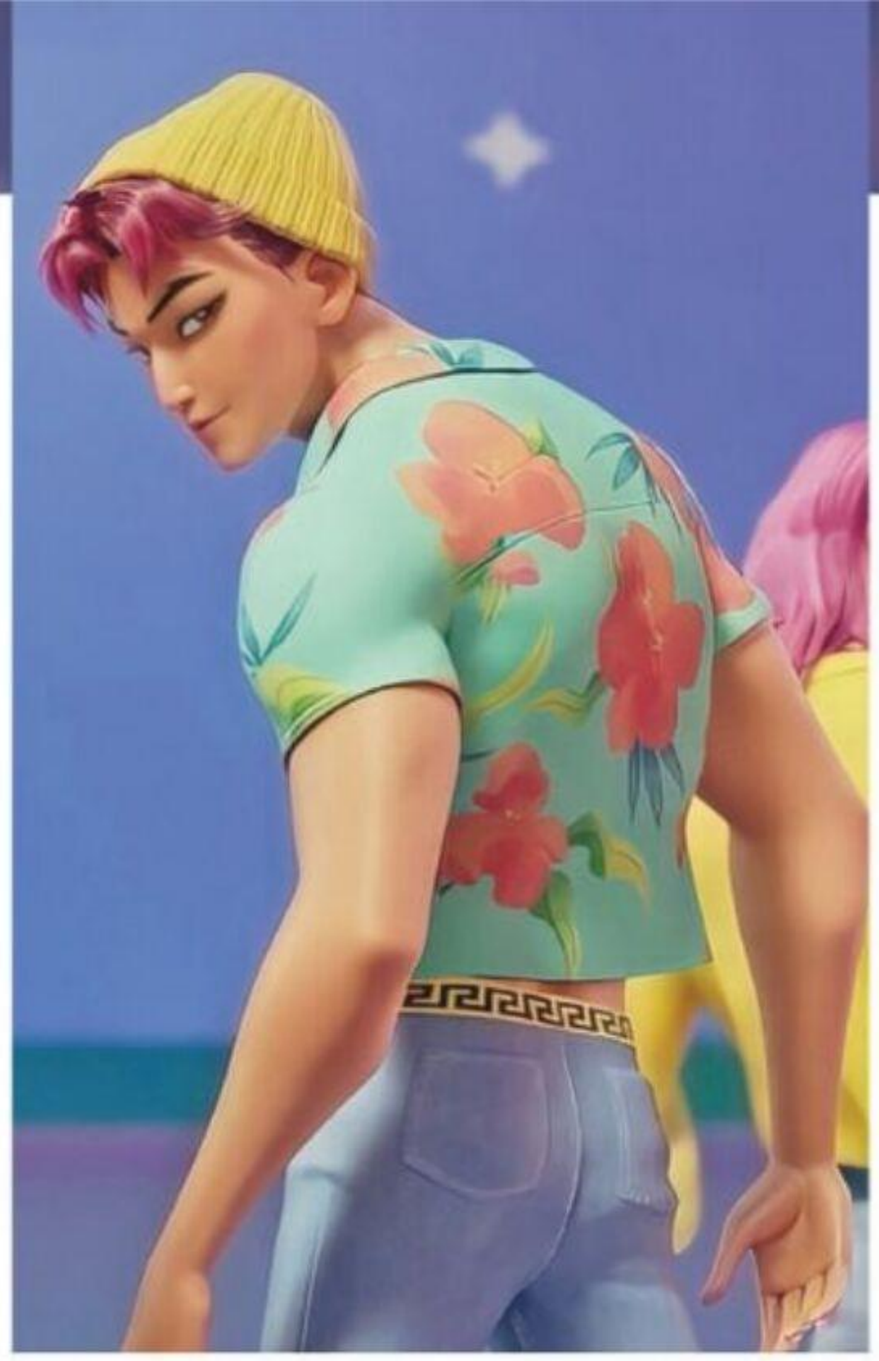
10. The Korean word "saja" translates to "lion," which explains why the animal is heavily featured in the Saja Boys' branding.

11. A final standoff song between Rumi and Celine was cut from the movie because it ultimately didn't make sense for the storyline.

12. *KPop Demon Hunters* boasts the most costume looks of any animated movie in history.

13. Huntr/x use weapons based on traditional Korean items: Rumi wields a saingeom, a straight sword; Mira uses a woldo, a curved polearm; and Zoe fights with shin-kal, spirit knives.





▲ **14. The Saja Boys** all have the same CG body, except for muscular Abby Saja. "We bulked him up like 20%," Kang told *Forbes*.

15. The events in the movie take place over 16 days.

▼ **16. Derpy Tiger and Sussie Bird** are based on popular Korean folk art that features a bumbling tiger who serves as a guardian spirit and a magpie who delivers good news. Co-director Chris Appelhans initially wanted Derpy and Sussie to be the film's narrators.

▼ **17. Broadway legend** Lea Salonga performs the singing for Celine. Salonga also did the singing voices for Fa Mulan in Disney's *Mulan* films and Princess Jasmine in *Aladdin*.

▲ **18. Liza Koshy** voiced the on-air host during the interview scene.

19. "Golden" was nominated for Song of the Summer at the 2025 MTV Video Music Awards, but the Huntr/x hit lost to Tate McRae's "Just Keep Watching."

20. Rumi and Jinu almost shared a kiss, but the scene was cut from the final version of the film. "The restraint is sexier," Kang said on Reddit. ✦

The Ultimate QUIZ

Prove you're a true stan by blitzing these questions and showing how it's done-done-done. By Erin Crabtree

1. Why does Rumi have patterns?

- ☐ A. She's in love with a demon
- ☐ B. Her father was a demon
- ☐ C. She promised her soul to Gwi-Ma
- ☐ D. Her mother was a demon

2. Which is not the name of a Saja Boys member?

- ☐ A. Mystery
- ☐ B. Romance
- ☐ C. Abby
- ☐ D. Broody

3. What does Huntr/x do to try to heal Rumi's voice?

- ☐ A. Put her on vocal rest
- ☐ B. Summon the power of the Honmoon
- ☐ C. Get tonics from a healer
- ☐ D. Force her to sing anyway

4. Where did Jinu's bird get its hat?

- ☐ A. Stole it from Jinu's tiger
- ☐ B. Bought it at a store
- ☐ C. Found it on the street
- ☐ D. Created it with magic

5. Which Huntr/x member is Korean American?

- ☐ A. Mira
- ☐ B. Rumi
- ☐ C. Zoey
- ☐ D. None of them

6. How did Jinu become a demon?

- ☐ A. He was born a demon
- ☐ B. He sacrificed himself to save his family
- ☐ C. He joined the Saja Boys
- ☐ D. He made a deal with Gwi-Ma to escape poverty

7. Which real-life K-pop girl group does Huntr/x overcome on the charts with "How It's Done"?

- ☐ A. Blackpink
- ☐ B. Twice
- ☐ C. Aespa
- ☐ D. Red Velvet

8. Which Saja Boy do the fans not ship with any member of Huntr/x?

- ☐ A. Baby
- ☐ B. Romance
- ☐ C. Mystery
- ☐ D. Abby

9. What was the name of the singing, demon-hunting group Celine and Rumi's mom were in?

- ☐ A. The Happy Honmoon Girls
- ☐ B. Sunlight Sisters
- ☐ C. Sister Power
- ☐ D. The Supreme Hunters

10. Where do Huntr/x and the Saja Boys have their final face-off?

- ☐ A. Sold-out concert
- ☐ B. Private jet
- ☐ C. Music festival
- ☐ D. Idol Awards

11. What kind of weapon does Rumi use when fighting demons?

- ☐ A. Knife
- ☐ B. Polearm
- ☐ C. Sword
- ☐ D. Spear

12. Which famous Korean actor is not in the *KPop Demon Hunters* cast?

- ☐ A. Sandra Oh
- ☐ B. Ken Jeong
- ☐ C. Daniel Dae Kim
- ☐ D. Yunjin Kim

Answers: 1. b; 2. d; 3. c; 4. a; 5. c; 6. d, 7. b; 8 a; 9. b; 10. d; 11. c; 12. a.

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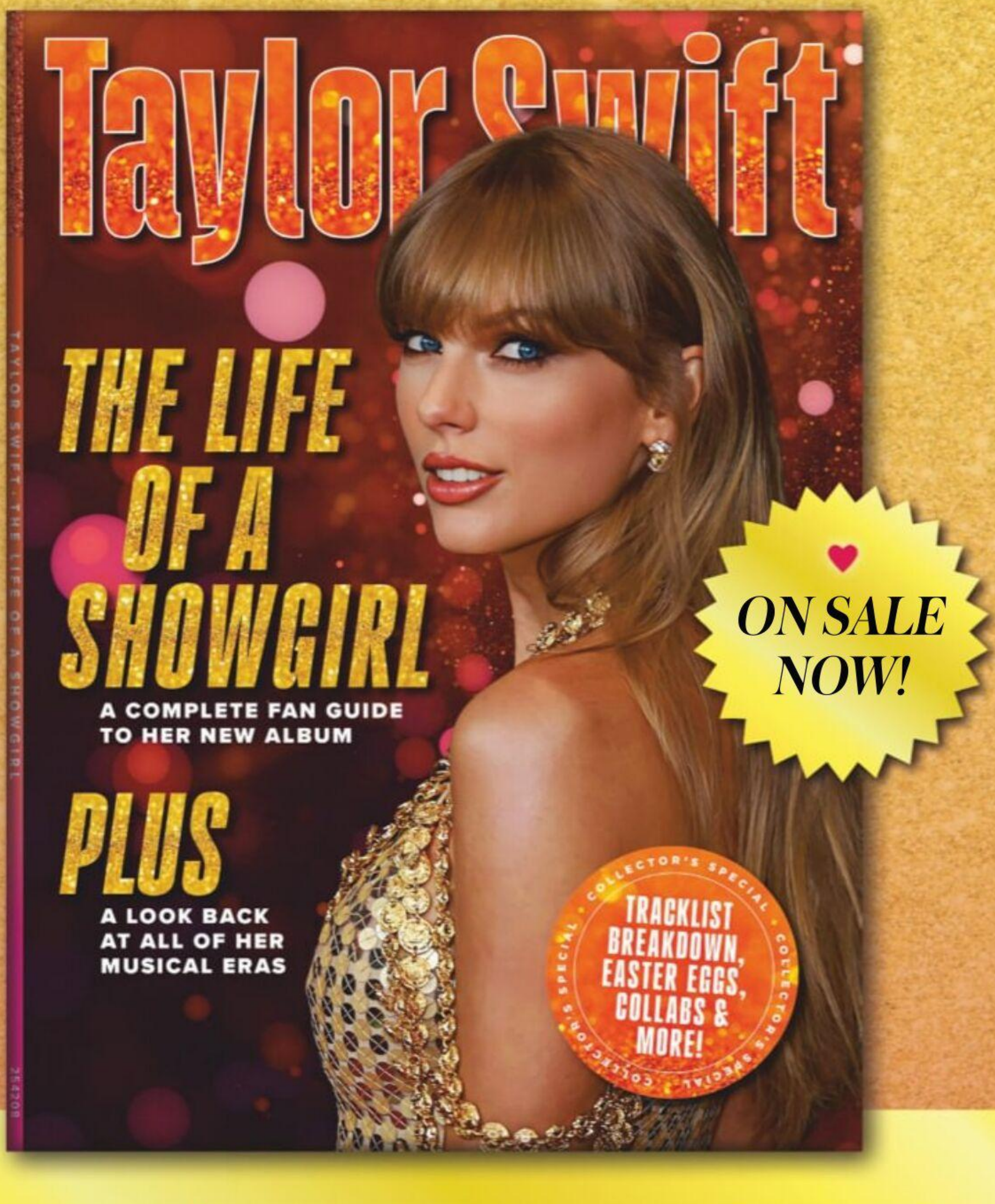
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